

Social Media for School Communication

It's easy to dismiss social media as a fascination of young people but to do so minimizes one of the fastest growing trends in technology. The Pew Internet and American Life Project recently found that over 71% of teens have a Facebook profile and 75% of adults have one too. Social media tools have become the way for a school or business to quickly and efficiently disseminate information. Because of the almost universal access to social media across all demographic groups it often reaches people that traditional forms of communication miss.

The online presence for many schools has moved beyond the school website. It now includes a Facebook page (www.facebook.com), a Twitter account (www.twitter.com), blogs by teachers, principals or the superintendent, and YouTube (www.youtube.com) and Flickr (www.flickr.com) for sharing videos and photos about school events.

Seven Reasons to Pay Attention to Social Media

1. **It Builds Relationships** – Creating relationships is important for leaders and social media is a new, and very effective, way to build support among your stakeholders.
2. **It's About Customers** – Parents and employees often come from a different generation, one that wants to work differently and to be involved in the educational process. Social media is a way to engage them in the life of your school.
3. **They're Already Talking** – Check out the Internet and other online sites. People are already commenting about your school and about your leadership.
4. **Listen as Well as Share** – The principal is responsible for maintaining the school's image. Use social media to interact with parents and community. Use it to both hear from them and to share information. It can provide a way to detect rumors and allow you to respond quickly.
5. **You'll Be Well Received** – Almost everyone we've talked with reports the positive reception they get from having a blog, a Twitter feed or a school Facebook page.
6. **It Builds Community** – People commit to things they care about. As we described earlier, the public is less trusting of schools. Social media promotes community by inviting people to be part of the conversation.
7. **It's Here to Stay** – While the forms of social media continue to change the evidence is that our use of the tools will only accelerate. Increasingly the expectation is that schools stay connected to their families and their community. Social media is the tool. (Adapted from: Porterfield & Carnes (2010), AASA Online)

Getting Started

Facebook has become the standard for social media presence. Having a school or district Facebook page establishes your district as one that is up-to-date, comfortable with a more transparent environment and capable of disseminating information quickly. You can create your school or district's Facebook page by going to the sign-up page (www.facebook.com/FacebookPages). At the bottom is a link to "Create a Page for a Business" that will walk you through the process.



Resources

Selected print and online resources about this topic are available on page 2.

Twitter is another phenomenon. It is a form of micro-blogging and each entry is limited to no more than 140 characters. It's based on a simple concept---people want to know what is happening and Twitter is a way to deliver brief updates quickly and efficiently to people who follow your account.

YouTube and Flickr provide tools for schools to post pictures and videos of school events. Both sites are free and provide a quick and easy way to share information about your school. You can build links between these accounts and Facebook or Twitter.

Resources

Print Resources

Williamson, R. & Johnston, J. H. (2012). *School Leader's Guide to Social Media*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education. (www.eyeoneducation.com)

Online Resources

Pew Internet and American Life Project (www.pewinternet.org) - This research center provides information and tools for understanding the impact of social media on American society.

Facebook Page – (www.facebook.com/pages/create.php) This site provides information about creating a Facebook page for your school or district. These pages are different than a personal site and the site will walk you through the process of creating your page.

Social Media and Young Adults (2010) – This report from the Pew Internet and American Life Project shares data about the use of social media by young adults.

(<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx>)

EPI: Developing successful, long-lasting business and education partnerships with a positive impact on America's youth.

www.educationpartnerships.org

This brief prepared by Ronald Williamson, Eastern Michigan University, February 2012

The Fine Print

Education Partnerships, Inc., provides this article as a service to educators and does not assume any responsibility for the content of the article, or the positions taken by the authors or the Web sites or other authors whose works are included. This article reflects information currently available and is not the official position of Education Partnerships, Inc.

Disclaimer: All URLs listed in this site have been tested for accuracy, and contents of Web sites examined for quality, at the time of addition. Content accuracy and appropriateness, however, cannot be guaranteed over time as websites and their content changes constantly. The author takes no responsibility for difficulties that may result from the use of any website listed herein.

Permission: You may use or download content for research and educational purposes, or for your personal, noncommercial purposes, provided you keep unchanged all copyright and other notices with them. No other use of any content is permitted. You agree that you will make only lawful use of this article, and will only use articles in compliance with all federal, state and local laws and regulations. You agree that you will make no use of the research that violates anyone else's rights.

<http://www.educationpartnerships.org>